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I have been a member of the East Hartford Fire Department for over 27 years. I am a member of Local 1548 of the International Association of Firefighters. I am the legislative / political director for Local 1548. I was a union steward and on the executive board of Local 1548 for many years. I am here today to oppose proposed substitute HB5062.

Municipal union members are extremely fortunate to have the collective bargaining and arbitration laws that we enjoy in the state of Connecticut. The present arbitration laws have worked well for years and they are a fair and equitable way to settle disputed labor contracts. The laws as they are presently written are fair to both sides. The changes to these laws proposed in HB5062 are, in my opinion, unnecessary and unfair to both municipal employees and the cities and towns that employ them. I also believe that if these changes become law they will end up costing the taxpayers of those cities and towns unnecessary expenses. I further believe that it would cause a huge backlog in the arbitration system that would ultimately require the state to hire several additional arbitrators. The supposed reason for this legislation is to save money for municipalities in this state and I believe if this legislation passes in its present form it will in fact have the exact opposite effect, ultimately costing those same municipalities more money.

If proposed substitute HB5062 becomes law as it's presently written municipalities and the unions that represent their employees would have only thirty days from the date they open negotiations to renegotiate labor contracts before final and binding arbitration is imposed upon them. Thirty days is not enough time to renegotiate most municipal labor contracts. The end result of this thirty day bargaining deadline is that a lot more municipal labor contracts would end up in arbitration ultimately costing both the municipal taxpayers and the union more money. The most recent information that I could find on the number of municipal labor contracts that ended up being settled by binding arbitration was from a study done in 2006 by the Office of Legislative Research. That study showed that only 4 percent of municipal employee contracts and 10 percent of municipal teacher contracts end up being settled in arbitration. I believe that if you give the sides only 30 days to renegotiate their labor contracts that probably 50 percent or more of those contracts will end up in arbitration, 30 days is just not enough to renegotiate a municipal labor contract. If this proposed legislation becomes law I believe that it will have the exact opposite effect from what it was intended to do. I think this legislation has the potential to end up costing the municipalities of this state and ultimately the taxpayers of those municipalities money.

The present system works and is fair to all parties. The legislation proposed in substitute HB5062 is unfair to both sides. Under the present law arbitration panels are composed of 3 members. If this legislation passes it would have only one arbitrator deciding the contract. The reason there are 3 arbitrators on a panel now is that in the interest of fairness so that no one person has the power to dictate how a contract will be settled. This is a principle of our form of government. The appellate courts and the supreme court all have several members appointed to

them so in the interest of fairness no one person has the power to dictate how any case will be settled. The present arbitration laws have worked well for years. We should not be looking to change a system that's fair to all sides. One single person should not be given the power to decide how contracts are settled.

I respectfully request that the members of this committee please oppose proposed substitute HB6194 or any similar legislation that might come before you this session. I would also ask that your colleagues in the State Legislature, should this bill make it to the floor of the full Legislature, please oppose this legislation. If you have any questions on this matter I'd be happy to answer them. You or your colleagues can feel free to contact me with any questions that you might have on this matter. My home address, contact phone numbers, and email address are at the top of my testimony. My colleagues and I thank you for opposing this legislation and we are asking for your future opposition of this legislation.